

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

STAT

19 May 1983

Ms. Joan Hausrath
74 Union Street
East Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Dear Ms. Hausrath:

STAT Our Fine Arts Commission, at its 16 May meeting, discussed [redacted] suggestion that we mount an exhibition of your work. While there was general admiration by Commission members for the artistic quality and serene beauty of your weavings, we concluded that so specialized a show would not be in keeping with our present program. I am returning your pictures with the Commission's thanks.

Our interest in your work, however, is sufficiently strong to cause me to ask you for some price information. We have a small budget for the acquisition of individual works of art and one of your hangings might be an appropriate addition to our permanent collection. Please let me know specifically what the weavings in the enclosed photographs would cost should we decide to acquire one. I am retaining Xerox copies so as to have a reference point when I next hear from you.

Thank you again for your interest in our program. We wish you all success in your pursuit of what is clearly an important contribution to the weaver's art.

Sincerely,

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[redacted]
Chairman, Fine Arts Commission

Enclosure

STAT [redacted] (19 May 1983)

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... A Painterly Approach To Weaving

By Roger T. Dunn

In viewing the recent weavings of Joan Hausrath, one is apt to see them first in the context of painting before considering how they relate to the traditions of the craft that produced them. The subtle transitions in which saturated hues bleed into adjacent colors, creating forms with soft edges, suggest some of the fluid paint effects of such Color Field painters as Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis. The selection and juxtapositions of color exploit the effects of advancing (warm) and receding (cool) colors and contrasting value ranges to produce illusions of light and space.

Hausrath's manipulation of color is rooted in the same theories that interested such artists as Josef Albers, Victor Vasarely and Richard Anuszkiewicz. Indeed, several of Hausrath's weavings explore the optical phenomenon of color vibration found in Op Art. And in the way the liquid and atmospheric paint effects play against the rigidity of the woven pattern, it is tempting to make comparisons with some of the Grid painters, notably Agnes Martin, who superimposes strict pencil-drawn grids over fields of delicately modulated color. However, though there is clearly a basis in modern painting for Hausrath's weavings, the result is the expression of an innovative and personal style, and her choice of weaving as the medium is integral to the result.

Hausrath's recent wall hangings developed out of her weaving of rugs in weft-faced striped patterns, in which she first used natural-dyed yarns then moved towards more emphatic statements of color. To achieve the color combinations she sought, Hausrath became more involved with dyeing the yarns and began to experiment with ikat techniques.

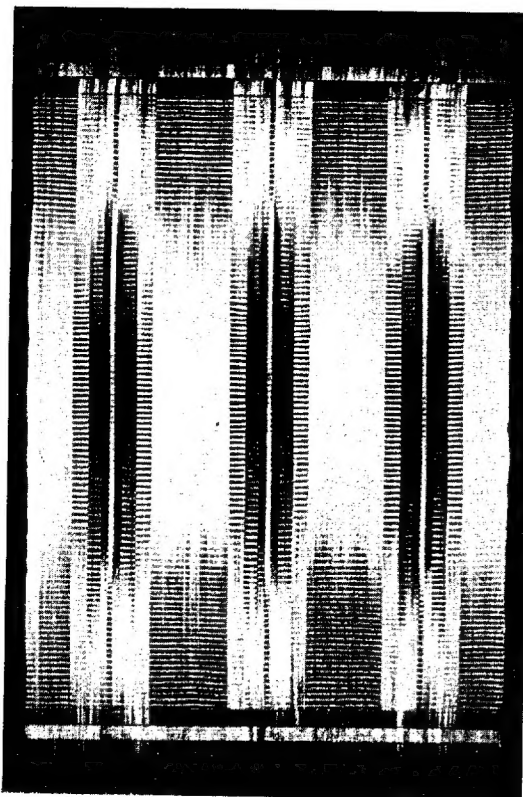
Ikat dyeing currently provides the "painterly" aspect in Hausrath's work—the wash effects that challenge the patterned regularity of the weaving itself. Originally she bound the yarns to be dyed. Now she prefers dip dyeing, which allows the color to bleed. Also, whereas Hausrath first dyed the yarns for one warp at a time, she now has tripled her efforts so that three weavings are produced from one threading of the loom.

The transition from rugs to wall pieces was dictated by the pictorial effects of light and space that she began to achieve through her increased manipulation of color. The new works also depart from the earlier rugs by using a warp-faced instead of weft-faced weave. The resulting ability to compose in terms of dominant vertical rather than horizontal bands provides the basis for designs that relate to the atmospheric light and space experienced in nature. The vertical bands of color and the horizontal pattern of the weave appear and disappear, advance or recede in space, depending on the saturations and juxtapositions of color, and on contrasting or close value relationships. The phenomenon of optical blending, by which two colors in close proximity will appear as a third, increases the range of hues, intensities and values beyond that provided by the colors of the yarns alone.

Such results can only be achieved by careful planning and design work beforehand, particularly since several warps are being dyed simultaneously. Each weaving is first worked out as a color study in crayon on graph paper. The sources for Hausrath's compositions are often quite unconventional: "I'm always on the lookout for images that have potential for translation into fiber. It might be a back-lighted fence, reflections on a window, or even an advertisement for Venetian blinds." The latter inspiration, for example, has resulted in a *Venetian Blind* series in which the weavings successfully evoke the same effect of back-lighting and of horizontal and vertical bands dissolving in intense luminosity.

Though the color sketch on graph paper provides the direction from which a new work will develop, the next steps of dyeing and weaving offer their own variables

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Page 48, *Color Rhythms*, 1981; wool, 56 by 30 inches. Page 49, *Venetian Blind V* (set into detail); wool, 36 by 14 inches. Left, *Ikat Color Stripes II*, 1980; wool, 48 by 32 inches. Photos by the artist. Below, Joan Hausrath. Photo: Kerry Yukna.



which greatly affect the design. As Hausrath works, she stays alert to the unexpected or accidental effects that can be effectively exploited to further enhance the design. In this way she finds the entire process interesting: "Dyeing the warp requires a lot of time. Since I enjoy this phase, I don't mind the hours invested. It's also exciting to watch the weaving develop on the loom. The thrill of seeing the color relationships emerge during the weaving process prevents this step from becoming a merely mechanical one. The weaving goes much faster than the dyeing, and I like this particular kind of break-up of process and activity. I really enjoy *making* these weavings!"

Hausrath holds an M.F.A. in intaglio printmaking from Bowling Green University in Ohio and an M.A. in art history from Ohio State University. Formal weaving instruction consists of a course taken from Alice Marcoux at the Rhode Island School of Design. Mostly, however, she has developed her weaving skills through workshops, self-instruction and constant practice. She says, "My fine arts background has directed me to one-of-a-kind works rather than production weaving."

This past year Hausrath, an associate professor in art at Bridgewater State College in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, was a finalist in that state's competitive Crafts Fellowship award. Encouraged by the recognition her work is receiving, she says: "Every weaving I do excites ideas for several more. As I complete one I can hardly wait to begin dyeing the warp for another. Where this will lead I do not know. Right now I have so many stored-up ideas I cannot envision ever exhausting them all." •

Roger T. Dunn, who holds a Ph. D. in art history, teaches that subject at Bridgewater State College, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.